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Status of the secretariat of the Forum

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present report covers the activities and the status of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests during the programme budget biennium 2002-2003, with a focus on 2003 activities. The purpose of the report is to provide a formal record for the information of Governments, international organizations and major groups that supported the Forum process and its secretariat, including contributions to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests activities or through other means.

The generous contributions of donor countries to the Trust Fund are gratefully acknowledged. The contributions greatly facilitated the work of the secretariat of the Forum. Many key activities would not have been possible without those contributions to the Trust Fund.

The Forum secretariat has successfully carried out all activities of the subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, programme 7, Economic and social affairs, under the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. Many of the programme budget elements and other key activities of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum were carried out with extrabudgetary resources from the Trust Fund.

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I. Introduction

1. It will be recalled that to further pursue the international arrangement on forests and to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global dialogue for policy implementation, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2000/35 decided to establish the United Nations Forum on Forests as a subsidiary body.

2. Consequently, subprogramme 9: Sustainable forests management, was established for the first time under the programme 7: Economic and social affairs, in the programme budget of the United Nations Secretariat for 2002-2003. Accordingly, the programme activities of the secretariat of the Forum in the biennium 2002-2003 were carried out using funds from the programme budget as well as from the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

3. The present report covers the activities and the status of the secretariat of the Forum during the programme budget biennium 2002-2003, with a focus on 2003. The purpose of the report is to provide a formal record for the information of Governments, international organizations and major groups that supported the Forum process and its secretariat, including contributions to the Trust Fund or through other means.

II. Objective for the biennium, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement

4. The stated objective of the subprogramme for sustainable forest management was to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests with a view to strengthening long-term political commitment, based on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forest (Forest Principles), chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) process, in a manner consistent with and complementary to existing international instruments relevant to forests.

5. In the execution of the subprogramme, a number of accomplishments were expected of the secretariat and the criteria for indicators of achievements of the expected accomplishments were clearly outlined in the programme budget for 2002-2003.

A. Accomplishments and indicators of achievement

6. Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme were to include "fostering international cooperation in sustainable forest management and development among Member States, including coordination between North and South and public and private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels". The indicator of achievement was the number of coordination and cooperation activities implemented on mutually agreed actions on forests and the fostering of synergies:

(a) Enhanced forest policy development and dialogue:

(i) At the international level, the Forum has enhanced forest policy development and dialogue through:

- Providing a forum for countries, major groups and forest-related organizations to come together and work towards consensus on their understanding of the need for sustainable forest management and ways of achieving it;
- Promoting a collaborative approach among international organizations concerned with sustainable forest management;
- Stimulating country- and organization-led initiatives for sustainable forest management.

(ii) At the national level, the Forum has provided a context for countries to develop their national forest programmes and strategies for sustainable forest management;

(b) Facilitated and promoted coordination and cooperation among other forest-related organizations, instruments and processes:

(i) The secretariat of the Forum has established important links and working relationships with many forest-related international organizations, instruments and processes, inter alia, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, which currently has 14 member organizations;[1]

(ii) Under the Partnership a number of major forest-related organizations, instruments and processes have been brought together. The secretariat of the Forum has actively contributed to the joint initiatives of the Partnership and other collaborative activities between Partnership members in support of the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action. The progress of the work of the Partnership in 2003 is reported in its annual report, framework of the Partnership for 2004;

(iii) The secretariat of the Forum has established links to other international processes, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, conferences of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention and Climate Change, the International Tropical Timber Council and the governing bodies of member organizations of the Partnership;

(c) Fostered participatory working modalities, including through the involvement of major groups:

(i) The secretariat of the Forum actively promoted the participation of the nine major groups identified in chapter 23 of Agenda 21. The multi-stakeholder dialogue is an important and regular part of Forum sessions, which provided opportunities for genuine dialogue between representatives of countries and the major groups. The secretariat has been exploring ways to facilitate non-governmental organization accreditation for more balanced and representative participation in Forum sessions;

(ii) The secretariat of the Forum has taken steps to ensure enhanced participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, through the decision of the Forum to extend travel support to representatives from those countries to attend Forum sessions;

(iii) It was evident that the participation of stakeholders has been enhanced subsequent to the establishment of the Forum as an international arrangement on forests, in the implementation of coordination and cooperation activities for sustainable forest management programmes and processes.

7. An expected accomplishment of the subprogramme was "facilitating and promoting the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, as well as other actions that may be agreed upon". The indicators of achievement were the adoption and implementation of the plan of action, including the meeting of targets, timetables and financial provisions and the number of national, regional and global activities carried out in support of national forest programmes and other integrated land-use programmes:

(a) Adoption and implementation of the plan of action:

(i) At its first session, the Forum formulated and adopted the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for 2001-2005 with an annex containing a plan of action. The plan of action stated that its implementation would require: (a) establishment of national focal points; (b) effective cooperation among the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, bilateral donors and public/private partnerships; and (c) active stakeholder participation;

(ii) National focal points of more than half of the States members of the Forum have been established and the secretariat of the Forum has maintained active contacts with them, especially through the monthly issue of the Forum's Newsletter. As has been mentioned above, effective cooperation among members of Partnership has been well established. The active participation of stakeholders was evidenced by the ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue among Governments and major groups, including the private sector;

(iii) Partnerships in forestry have been established, the Asia Forest Partnership was recently established and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Existing partnerships, such as the International Model Forest Network, have been further enhanced, with a regional model forest centre for Latin America and the Caribbean being launched at the Summit. The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration: Investing in people and nature, was launched in 2003, consisting of a network of Governments, organizations, communities and individuals. Voluntary national reports submitted by countries to the second and third sessions of the Forum have cited numerous examples of partnerships related to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests/Framework reported to the Forum at its third session mentioned the work of its own partnerships, including that of the Global Forest Landscape Partnership;

(iv) Country- and organization-led activities held in 2003, with the active participation of the secretariat of the Forum, included plantations; the transfer of environmentally sound technologies for mangrove forests; monitoring; assessment and reporting;

(b) Financial resources and other means of implementation:

(i) The provision of financial resources, in particular to developing countries and countries with economics in transition, was essential to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and is needed to strengthen the capacity of relevant institutions and instruments engaged in implementation;

(ii) At the third session of the Forum the ad hoc expert group on finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies was established. It met from 13 to 17 December 2003.

8. Another expected accomplishment is "strengthening political commitments to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through ministerial engagements, action-oriented dialogues and policy formulation related to forests". The indicators for achievement were the number of high-level ministerial segment meetings, including policy dialogues between the ministers and executive heads of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and the formulation of policies relating to the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests:

(a) High-level ministerial segment meetings:

(i) A high-level ministerial segment meeting was held during the second session of the Forum, which has been reported on in detail in the 2002 report of activities;

(ii) The ministerial dialogue provided an opportunity for an enriching exchange of experiences and concentrated on four critical forest issues of global concern, including: forests and the current international political and policy agendas; conservation, protection and utilization of forests; cross-sectoral harmonization at the national, regional and global levels, including fostering synergies between forest-related instruments and organizations; and financing for sustainable forest management;

(iii) A ministerial breakfast was held during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July 2003, at which the coordinator and head of the secretariat made a presentation and participated in the discussion on forest areas and rural development. The discussion among participants focused on some of the risks facing forests, the role of forests as a victim of conflicts and forests' role in poverty eradication;

(b) Parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests:

The ad hoc expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests was established at the third session of the Forum. The ad hoc group would be composed of experts designated by Governments of the States members of the Forum, presided over by two co-chairpersons, one from a developing country and the other from a developed country. The tasks to be performed by the expert group have been clearly outlined. The first meeting of the expert group is to be held in New York from 6 to 10 September 2004. Preparations for the meeting have been undertaken by the secretariat.

9. An expected accomplishment of the subprogramme is "monitoring and assessing progress at the national, regional and global levels through voluntary reporting by Governments, as well as by regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments". The indicator of achievement was the establishment of an effective mechanism to monitor, assess and report on progress made:

(a) Voluntary reporting by Governments:

(i) By the end of 2003, about 70 countries had submitted voluntary national reports with regard to sustainable forest management. A number of countries referred to detailed analyses aimed at assessing progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action and identifying gaps. Other countries explained in more general terms how the IPF/IFF proposals for action were being implemented through their forest policies. In some cases, countries mapped the 16 Forum elements onto strategic directions in their national forestry strategy. In the voluntary national reports submitted at the second and third sessions, 14 countries explained that they had carried out or were in the process of carrying out an assessment of IPF/IFF proposals for action to determine their relevance in their national context;

(ii) In 10 voluntary national reports submitted at the third session, there was clear evidence that some major group representatives had been encouraged to participate in the development of the reports concerned. This was achieved in a variety of ways: inviting major group representatives to take part in discussions about the report; writing to major group representatives to request input to the report; and inviting major group representatives to comment on a draft of the voluntary national report. In other cases countries explained that the voluntary national reports were based on documents in which major groups had participated in the development. A number of countries reported that in future they wished to secure greater participation by major groups in developing voluntary national reports, especially if there was time to do so;

(b) Establishment of an effective mechanism to monitor, assess and report on progress made:

(i) At its third session, the Forum established the ad hoc expert group on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting. The expert group met at Geneva from 8 to 12 December 2003, and made recommendations for the consideration of the Forum at its fourth session;

(ii) It may be noted that prior to the above meeting, country-led initiatives on monitoring, assessment and reporting were held at Yokohama, Japan, and Viterbo, Italy, and criteria and indicators on sustainable forest management for purposes of reporting were discussed.

B. Outputs

10. In 2003, the secretariat of the Forum carried out activities for sustainable management of forests as outlined in the programme budget, supplemented by extrabudgetary resources from the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests:

(a) Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies:

(i) The third session of the Forum was held at Geneva from 26 May to 6 June 2003. A multi-stakeholder dialogue was held at the session;

(ii) The secretariat of the Forum, with the cooperation of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, prepared the reports of the Secretary-General for discussions at the third session of the Forum;

(iii) It was noteworthy that the Forum established three ad hoc expert groups at its third session: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting (which met at Geneva from 8 to 12 December 2003); finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (which met at Geneva from 15 to 19 December 2003); and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests (to meet in New York from 6 to 10 September 2004);

(iv) Documents prepared by the secretariat of the Forum in cooperation with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations for the third session of the Forum and the ad hoc expert groups were posted on the Forum's web site: www.un.org/esa/forests;

(v) At the third session of the Forum, the secretariat organized and arranged for numerous side events. The number of the side events was restricted only by the availability of time slots. The time slots for the side events were invariably oversubscribed at the session;

(b) Other substantive outputs:

(i) The secretariat of the Forum continued to publish and distribute a monthly newsletter, which was transmitted by e-mail to subscribers, comprising organizations, institutions and individuals. Subscribers to the newsletter increased substantially during the biennium and currently number more than 2,500. Many of the subscribers in turn disseminated the newsletter by distributing it in their own networks. The newsletters were posted on the above-mentioned web site;

(ii) The Collaborative Partnership on Forests portal on forest reporting was launched in April 2003. It is a web-based "portal" that facilitates access to national reports on forests for international reporting purposes, including reports of the Forum, the Commission on Sustainable Development, FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), UNEP, and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The web site also provides access to the corresponding reporting formats and key information on related efforts regarding reporting. The portal is intended to assist countries in their forest-related reporting efforts and to serve as an easily accessible source of data and information on forests for other stakeholders. The portal is available at www.un.org/esa/forests;

(iii) In an effort to make information on existing sources of foreign and domestic financing more readily available, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests *Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management* was published and launched on the World Wide Web in December 2002. The *Sourcebook* is an online searchable database on funding sources for sustainable

forest management. It provides information on sources of funds and on the funding policies and delivery mechanisms of bilateral donors, international organizations, development banks, private sector entities and other relevant bodies, in support of sustainable forest management in developing countries. It provides information on funding (e.g., grants, loans and equity investments) for sustainable forest management projects, as well as grants for training. It is hoped that the *Sourcebook* will help bridge demand and supply of funding and financial cooperation programmes. The *Sourcebook* is available at the above-mentioned web site;

(c) International cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison:

(i) The secretariat of the Forum is a member of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and it provided servicing for the Partnership meetings, including preparation of documents and the reports of the meetings. In 2003, the Partnership held three meetings, mostly in conjunction with major forest-related events to ensure the participation of representatives of its member organizations;

(ii) The secretariat maintained regular liaison with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations and other forest-related organizations and processes. The coordinator and head of the Forum secretariat or a staff member participated and made substantive contributions to the Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Committee on Forestry of FAO, the World Forestry Congress, as well as meetings of the International Tropical Timber Council, the Asia Forestry Partnership, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the ad hoc technical expert group meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, several country-led initiatives in support of the Forum, regional workshops, etc.;

(iii) The Coordinator and Head of the secretariat of the Fund held regular consultations at the ministerial level with such developing countries as Indonesia, China, the Republic of the Congo, Brazil, Nicaragua and Colombia, and donor countries as well as agencies on forest-related issues. Consultations were also regularly held with FAO, ITTO, IUCN, CIFOR, IUFRO and others. He called on ministers and senior officials of the European Union and the European Commission in Brussels, the United States State Department in Washington, D.C., as well as of a number of donor countries, such as Japan, New Zealand, Finland, France, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, among others, for continued provision of support to the Forum and its activities. The consultations were successful as the donor countries provided or have considered to provide substantial financial resources to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests and to the Trust Fund for technical cooperation for sustainable forest management;

(d) Documents:

The secretariat of the Forum prepared the reports of the Secretary-General and other documents on the programme elements for discussion at the third session of the Forum, as well as for the above-mentioned two ad hoc expert groups meetings. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations actively collaborated in the preparation of the documents and took the lead for certain programme elements.

III. Use of the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests

11. Many of the programme budget elements and other key activities of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum were carried out with extrabudgetary resources from the Trust Fund. The activities supported by the Trust Fund include: consultancies, travel of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, travel of staff, acquisition of office equipment and the engagement of staff under general temporary assistance.

A. Consultancies

12. A number of consultants, and institutional contractors were engaged on special service agreements for the following purposes:

(a) To organize the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the third session of the Forum and two multi-stakeholder dialogue consultations; ad hoc expert group preparation; and network building, outreach and communication;

(b) To devise a regional strategy that includes research and analysis of regional forest practices, challenges and lessons learned, as well as the preparation of activities to engage the Forum in closer regional discussions on forests and likewise foster regional commitments on sustainable forest management; follow-up and close collaboration with the Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Asian Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the Central American Convention on the Environment and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, among other regional initiatives;

(c) To facilitate an open dialogue between States members of the Forum and representatives of major groups on substantive issues for the third session; assist in preparing the Chairman's summary on the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the third session;

(d) To research and analyse progress of sustainable forest management in Africa and to organize side events for the third session;

(e) To prepare for and service the Collaborative Partnership on Forests network meeting, assist in the planning and provide technical support on Partnership matters during the third session;

(f) To design and manage a panel discussion on the economic aspects of forests at the third session;

(g) To translate the reporting format for voluntary national reporting and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests portal on reporting in French and Spanish;

(h) To develop a broad political strategy for action in Africa concerning the Forum and the promotion of sustainable forest management in the region;

(i) To arrange logistics, including travel and subsistence of participants and resource persons from developing countries, to provide secretariat services and to prepare background documents for discussion at the International Conference on Rural Livelihood, Forests and Biodiversity at Bonn, from 19 to 23 May 2003;

(j) To provide logistical and technical support to the organization of the Expert Workshop on the transfer of environmentally sound technologies for sustainable management of mangrove forests in Latin America at Managua, from 3 to 5 March;

(k) To prepare the technical background paper on finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies for the consideration of the ad hoc expert group;

(l) To prepare a document containing an executive summary, annexes and tables, reviewing the status of sustainable management technologies relevant to tropical forests.

B. Travel of representatives and staff members

13. Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives of developing countries in key forest-related activities, such as the International Conference on Rural Livelihoods, Forests and Biodiversity at Bonn and the Expert Workshop on the transfer of environmentally sound technologies for sustainable management of mangrove forests in Latin America, Managua. Travel assistance was also provided to the representatives of major groups from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the third session.

14. Staff members of the secretariat participated in many key forest-related events, inter alia, the Twelfth World Forestry Congress, the conferences of the parties to meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, country-led initiatives on monitoring, assessment and reporting, the ITTO Conference, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the FAO Committee on Forestry, meetings of the World Trade Organization, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Native Species Reforestation Project, the Forest Investment Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests meetings. The cost of travel to the meetings and subsistence were also provided to the seconded staff members.

C. Acquisition of office equipment

15. Office automation equipment, such as personal computers and peripherals, were purchased for the use of staff members, including those on non-reimbursable loan basis, general temporary assistance and consultants.

D. General temporary assistance

16. Staff at the Professional and other levels were engaged under general temporary assistance using the extrabudgetary resources of the Trust Fund. The Professional staff members were at the P-5 and P-4 levels and three support staff were at other levels. Only one support staff was engaged throughout 2003. The other staff members were engaged as needed during the year.

IV. Staffing of the secretariat of the Forum

17. By the end of year 2003, the secretariat consisted of 11 Professional posts and 5 support staff posts. The posts were funded from various sources: the Coordinator and Head of the secretariat, three Professional and two support staff are from the regular programme budget; three Professional posts were on non-reimbursable loan bases; two Professional and three support staff were on general temporary assistance from the Trust Fund; and two associate experts were made available by Finland and Sweden.

D-2	From regular budget resources
D-1	Non-reimbursable loan from UNEP
P-5	Non-reimbursable loan from FAO
P-5	From regular budget resources
P-5	From general temporary assistance allotment from the Trust Fund
P-4	From regular budget resources
P-4	Non-reimbursable loan from ITTO
P-4	From general temporary assistance allotment from the Trust Fund
P-3	From regular budget resources
P-2	Associate expert from Finland
P-2	Associate expert from Sweden
Two General Service	From regular budget
Three General Service	From general temporary assistance allotment from the Trust Fund

18. The seconded staff at the senior level from FAO, UNEP and ITTO has greatly assisted the secretariat in its substantive work. The associate experts from Finland and Sweden have contributed substantially to the work programme of the secretariat. It was evident that the effective execution of all of the programme budget elements

and the multi-year work programme of the Forum would not have been possible without the seconded staff members.

V. Acknowledgements

19. The generous contributions of donor countries to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests are gratefully acknowledged. The contributions greatly facilitated the work of the secretariat of the Forum. Many key activities would not have been possible without those contributions to the Trust Fund. In 2003, a major contribution to the Trust Fund in support of the Forum was received from the United States — the fourth in a series of such annual substantial contributions. Finland has contributed substantially to the Trust Fund for technical cooperation for sustainable forest management, as well as to the Trust Fund in support of the Forum. Germany has maintained, since 2001, its annual substantial contributions to the Trust Fund. Switzerland provided funds that facilitated the servicing of the third session of the Forum by the staff of the secretariat and has also similarly contributed for the fourth session.

VI. Conclusions

20. The secretariat of the Forum has successfully carried out all activities of subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, programme 7, Economic and social affairs, under the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. Many of the programme budget elements and other key activities of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum were carried out with extrabudgetary resources from the Trust Fund.

Notes

[1] Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO); secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; secretariat of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF); secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests; secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); World Bank; and World Conservation Union (IUCN).